

[James Reed]

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FOLKSTUFF - Pioneer History R

FOLKLORE—White Pioneers

Miss Effie Cowan, P.W.

McLennan County, Texas

District No. 8

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Interview with James Reed, of Dublin, Texas, taking a rest cure at Marlin.

"I have lived sixty-two years in or near Dublin, [?] County and celebrated my eighty-eighth birthday on April 2, 1939. Texas had been in the Union only four years when I was born in [?] County.

When I was only ten years old, my parents and three other families decided to move westward. I rode horseback on the trip and helped to drive a small herd of cattle to our new home. On September 4, 1860, the four families landed on Honey Creek, just three miles east of the site of the town of Carlton.

"There were Indian raids often and all through the section in which we lived. The Indians would steal our horses and cattle and sometimes they would kill some of the settlers.

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Bread was occasionally scarce, but every day we would have plenty of wild turkeys and venison to eat and there were lots of fish in the creek. It was a beautiful country, but wild yet it was a hunter's paradise.

"When I was seventeen years old, I became a cowboy and I helped to drive many herds of cattle to the northern markets. In 1876, I moved to Cottonwood, three miles east of Dublin, and since that time, I have lived in or near Dublin, except for about eight months which I spent in Fort Worth.

"The prairies were masses of tall, thick buffalo grass and that was why stock raisers moved to the West. But this very grass was often a source of great danger because careless campers left fire to set this grass on fire.

"People did not live as close together in those days as they do now. 2 "When people were fighting grass fires, they often stopped at the [nearest?] place for water and we would invite them in to eat. We would always have enough on hand to feed a large number of people, and could have it ready quickly. When any one saw smoke rolling up into the sky, they loaded their wagons and buggies with barrels of water and wet sacks and started out to help fight the fire. There couldn't be too many helpers at a fire fight, for this was hard work. The fighter would often have to fall out to 'get new wind'. As a last resort in fighting a fire, a beef would be killed, and the carcass dragged over the smouldering grass. I have seen a grass fire that was three miles wide and it seemed that the fire would go on forever. [Some?] one suggested that we kill a beef and drag the fire out. A large, fine beef was killed and cut in half. Each half was dragged, hide down, by two men on horse back, through the fire. Finally, the fire was put out in this way, but the fire had swept through a fifteen mile strip.

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“A well-remembered fire was the one that burned from the [?] ranch to the Chittenden ranch and the men fought fire from noon until late at night. Yet, with all its hardships, I think the pleasures of those pioneer days over shadow the sorrows and troubles.”